



## News from **Fluor Hanford**

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CONTACT:  
Geoff Tyree (509) 372-1145  
Geoffrey\_t\_tyree@rl.gov

### News Release

#### *Fluor Hanford completes major plutonium cleanup campaign*

Richland, Wash.—Workers at the U.S. Department of Energy's Hanford Site in southeastern Washington state have finished packaging more than 6,000 pounds of plutonium residues for disposal.

Residues—one of three major categories of plutonium materials at Hanford's Plutonium Finishing Plant—are the by-product of more than 40 years of processing plutonium for the U.S. weapons program. Workers have packed the residues into more than 1,200 specially designed drums that are being shipped to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant in New Mexico for permanent disposal.

"Completing the plutonium residues is a big deal," said Briant Charboneau, PFP project manager for the Department of Energy's Richland Operations Office. "It's a major risk reduction activity, allows us to move waste off the Hanford Site for disposal, and puts us on the brink of completing stabilization and packaging of all plutonium materials at the Plutonium Finishing Plant."

Residues are the second category of Hanford's plutonium materials to be completed. Fluor Hanford finished stabilizing and packaging the first category, plutonium solutions, in July 2002. The third category, plutonium solids, including metals and oxide powder, will be completed in 2004.

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The residues category is the largest by volume and includes ash from previous waste incinerator operations at Hanford and the Department of Energy's Rocky Flats Site in Colorado; debris from a type of cast, called crucibles, used to form molten plutonium metal into hockey puck-sized "buttons"; and a diverse group of scrap items.

Completing the packaging of plutonium residues beats a major regulatory commitment set by the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board, which called for processing and packaging the residues by April 2004. The DOE has committed to stabilize and package all three categories of plutonium materials by May 2004.

"This accomplishment at PFP demonstrates Fluor Hanford's commitment to safe and accelerated cleanup," said Scott Sax, Fluor Hanford project director. "Our employees are meeting their deadlines safely while accelerating the work. We are now poised to finish processing and packaging the remaining plutonium solids in the coming months and move into a deactivation and decommissioning phase. We're moving toward closing this facility that played such an important role in the Cold War."

The Plutonium Finishing Plant was built in 1949 to produce plutonium for the United States' weapons program. The plant stopped producing plutonium in 1990.

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